

Preface

Knock knock.

Who's there?

A joke without a punchline

Ok, let's get started.

I sent an early version of this manuscript to an editor friend of mine who's something of a "fixer" in the industry. He has "the editor's eye"—the ability to see what does and doesn't work in a book, and the additional gift of telling you how to, well ... fix it. This editor extraordinaire friend of mine told me that the book was "great," but that the introduction wouldn't work because the audience (that's you) wouldn't know the author (that's me) unless they had read my previous book, *Rebel to Your Will*. "Ah," I replied. "That makes sense!"

So, given how few people have read my previous book (I have the numbers, and let's just say, "It's no Purpose Driven Life"),¹ let's get to know each other, shall we?

1 There are dozens of us!!! But seriously, check it out: *Rebel to Your Will: A Story of Abuse, Father Hunger and Gospel Hope* (Christian Focus, 2024).

Sitting sloppily atop my neck is a head the size of an Easter Island statue, with a hairline that gently recedes into a “W” like that of an eastern European vampire (is there any other kind?). I have the torso of a Guatemalan construction worker and the arms of a tyrannosaurus rex. My quads belong to a *world class* speed skater, but my calves are copy and pasted from the body of an infant with an eating disorder. The contrast is ... unappealing.

The buff chicken leg is not the only thing that makes me look like one of those caricature drawings from the county fair. For example, my hands are small. Like, *really* small. Which helps with my glove budget, I guess. But here’s the thing: My forearms are huge. Or are they? Do they just look big because of how small my hands are? No, they’re big. Which makes my hands look even smaller than they really are. Which is *really* small.

All in all, I don’t—as the French would say—look “good.” If you want to know what I look like without pulling up Google, imagine if Russell Brand and Moana had an ethnically ambiguous baby. Now add thirty-seven years of terrible sleep patterns, poor nutrition, and inconsistent oral hygiene practices.

That’s me.

Hey, I may not be handsome, but at least I’m severely emotionally damaged from terrible childhood trauma. (Which, by the way, is what my first memoir was about.) This second memoir is also about me, a subject matter of which I never seem to tire!

Did you know that Frederick Douglass wrote three autobiographies during his life? Three! (And yes, before you ask, I am comparing myself to Frederick Douglass,

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which probably won't come back to haunt me.) And he's not the only one. Apparently, people love to write multiple books about themselves. Consider:

- Harrison Scott Key (3 Memoirs)
- Sue William Silverman (2 Memoirs)
- Ian Matthews (3 Memoirs)

The list could go on, but it won't ... because I've basically exhausted the first page of Google searches for "authors with more than one memoir," and nobody goes beyond the first page of a Google search. Ever. The point is, there is no rule that says memoirs are subject to the one child policy. This isn't communist China, and my second book baby has a right to live!

I might write fifty memoirs, and you can't stop me. YOU'RE NOT MY DAD! Also, who is my dad? Speaking of not knowing my father ...

My first memoir was dark and sad. I shared all kinds of stories about fatherlessness, abuse, and other sad stuff. It was a real charcuterie board of suffering. This book will also be sad. But hopefully it will be funny too!

Oh, and I'm a pastor. Does that seem weird to you? It does to me. Here's the thing about pastors: They're not supposed to be funny. But I am. For example:

A man walks into a bar and says, "Ouch."

You see? Funny.

Now, you may be wondering, "How can a pastor be funny when he reads nothing but theology and other esoteric subject matter?"

The answer is ... I don't know.

I don't know how or why I'm funny; I just am. I take everything I read—theology, philosophy, history, science, etc.—and turn it all into pure comedy gold. Gold, I tell you! But I digress. I'm putting Descartes before the horse. (You see what I did there? I took a thing from philosophy and used it to make you laugh. Gold!)

This second memoir is the story of my local church, another subject matter of which I never seem to tire. I love my church and she loves me. (Far more than I deserve, by the way. You'll see what I mean by the end of this book.) But here's the thing about the church—my church, your church, and every true church—she's kind of a mess this side of heaven. Sometimes the messiness of the local church is sad, painful, confusing, or all of the above. But it can also be hilarious. And that's what this book is about: the comedy of God's messy people falling down all over themselves as they stumble toward heaven together.

As the subtitle states, this is a true(ish) story. I don't know that I could testify in court, under oath, to every last detail within these pages, but the broad contours are true and really did happen. And trust me when I tell you that the strangest parts of the story are the truest. Life, as we've been told, is often stranger than fiction.

I really am a pastor, I really did lead a church revitalization, and by God's grace, it really did work. Nevertheless, you should think of these stories as caricatures. You know what a caricature is, right? Those hilarious carnival drawings where the artist draws a picture of you but accentuates certain prominent features for the sake of comedy. That's the perfect metaphor for this book. So read accordingly.

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Enjoy the comedy of grace, because it's really there ...
for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear.

